

Christmas Update 2009



Chair's Report

Welcome to the new Christmas Update 2009. Included in this update is the tale of Tia our Mastiff dog, who came into our care after having had a tragic life, and our appeal to help raise funds for her.

We would like to thank everyone who helps ARC in many varied ways and who gives up their free time to assist our animals. We'd also like to thank our vets Christabel, Wendy, Tim and the lovely veterinary nurses at the Twickenham and Richmond branches.

ARC has been very busy during 2009. We have amongst other things changed our rabbit re-homing policies, and prioritised calls for cats needing to come in – including the many strays that have appeared and the various feral cats that have needed trapping. We have also been discussing ways to bring our website up to date, to accommodate fund

raising and appeals, including Just Giving, along with a DONATE button on all pages. It is our aim over the next year to modernise our website to make it easier to navigate, and to have a more visible online presence. This should help increase our fundraising ability and incoming enquiries, as well as acting as an online information resource for animal adopters and pet owners.

Between January 09 and October 09, ARC has taken in 117 cats, 30 kittens, 127 rabbits, 23 guinea pigs, and 3 dogs. For a small local charity, this is a phenomenal achievement. As always it is ARC's aim to continue to provide the best care for all the animals we help. Thank you to everyone who continues to support ARC, either through voluntary help, re-homing, fundraising or donations.

Rachael Bower, Chair



Year of the Stray by Karen Hide

Sadly 2009 has seen a marked increase in the number of stray cats ARC has had to deal with. In late spring, I took a call from a lady in Kingston who reported that she had a pregnant tortoiseshell cat in her garden and 2 young ginger cats which she assumed were the offspring from a previous litter that she must have had in the late autumn of 2008. The cat was reportedly friendly but her kittens were very timid. Emily my daughter and I equipped ourselves with traps and some tasty food and headed off to Kingston. Fortunately, the lady had been feeding the cat and her youngsters and she had coaxed the mummy cat indoors so that we could just pop her in a basket. Her kittens, which we estimated to be about 6 months old, had clearly never had a



Louie who was successfully rehomed from the ARC earlier this year

home and were very frightened of people. We baited the traps with food and went indoors to watch the proceedings through the patio doors. The traps worked better than we could have hoped and after some suspicious sniffing neither kitten could resist the food and both walked straight in to take the food, and in so doing, sprung the traps. The cats were then taken back to Twickenham Veterinary Surgery where it was confirmed that the adult cat was indeed heavily pregnant and the two timid kittens were both spayed after we discovered that despite being ginger, both were female. Rachael took the mummy cat and fostered

her so that she could give birth in safety and the kittens could be raised in a domestic environment. The cat's two older daughters were returned to the garden in Kingston where they had been found as they were too timid to re-homed, but the lady who had reported them to us kindly volunteered to keep feeding and caring for them.

In that same week I took another call from a gentleman in Sheen who told me that he had a black cat in his garden with 5 small kittens. Once again Emily and I set off with the traps. With the help of the gentleman we quickly located mummy and kittens in a back garden, behind some dustbins. The mum ran off over

the fence but I was able to grab each hissing kitten from behind the bin. They were about 5 weeks old so were luckily young enough to tame in one of our wonderful foster homes. The mummy cat had, however, made herself scarce

so we left the trap and later that week the owner of the property managed to catch the cat. Rachael collected her and took her to PG Andre Veterinary Surgery to be spayed, before returning her to the garden due to her being feral.

During the summer months we collected several stray cats and kittens. One case that sticks in my mind was that of a pair of cats living in a garden in Hounslow. I was alerted to their plight when I received an email from a lady who told me she had a very thin, fluffy black cat in her garden. He had been in and

out of her garden for several weeks but she explained in her email that he no longer seemed able to jump the fence and she was worried that he was in danger from the local fox population. I went over as soon as I could and the lady had kindly brought the poor creature into her lounge where he was lying on a blanket. He was incredibly thin but so gentle. I popped him in a basket and drove directly to the Twickenham surgery so that he could be examined. Sadly this poor boy was in a very bad state, unable to eat or drink, and, when his condition did not improve, he was put to sleep.

When I had picked up this poor boy the householder had told me that she also had a tabby cat which had been visiting regularly. So a week later, when a foster space became available, I asked the lady to try and tempt the cat into her kitchen with some food. This she did and I picked up the sweet little female tabby cat, who was later named Jenny by her foster home. Jenny was taken to the vet where she was health-checked, spayed, wormed and micro-chipped. She had clearly been a domestic cat once but was now very nervous of humans, but with many weeks of love and patient care she was eventually re-homed.

Autumn brought yet more strays. Most notably a female cat who was discovered in the yard of a plastics factory. Once again, I went out with the trap. The mummy cat took off over the roof of the factory as soon as I arrived, but I discovered two tabby kittens about 1 week old sleeping peacefully on a pallet full of plastic beads. They could not be reached, so a fork lift truck was summoned to move the stack of pallets which surrounded the kittens in order to retrieve them. As the pallets were being moved one of the staff at the factory heard a very loud and plaintive mew coming from beneath a stack of four huge pallets. Another kitten must have slipped from its sleeping place high up onto the ground underneath the stack of pallets. The fork lift truck moved the pallets one by

one and eventually I was able to see not one, but two very hungry black kittens. Leaving the two well-fed sleeping tabby kittens in a carrier next to the baited trap, I took the two starving black kittens home for a bottle feed. I returned to the factory at 5pm but the mummy cat was nowhere to be seen so a member of staff kindly offered to let me back into the yard at 10pm when fortunately the mummy cat was safely in the trap. Happily she reared all 4 kittens in the cat house until they were old enough to go off to lovely new homes. The mummy cat was feral so we had her spayed and she was released back into the factory yard from where she came.

As I write this, I have recently collected and had to have put to sleep a handsome un-castrated stray from Surbiton, after it was found that he had an enormous tumour in his chest which was making it impossible for him to breathe. I have spent this week unsuccessfully trying to trap an elderly stray in Ham and another living in a Sunbury industrial estate right next to the M3. In addition there are currently two other stray cats, one in Whitton and the other in Isleworth, that we have been unable to take in because we have no space for them. Both sound old and sick but the best we could do for them was to arrange veterinary treatment until we have foster spaces available.

In the eight years since ARC was established I have never known so many stray cats to be reported in the relatively affluent borough of Richmond and its surrounding areas. I can only guess that we are seeing the results of the recession with people abandoning their cats because they cannot afford to care for them, particularly if they are old or sick. The stories here are just a few of the cases we have dealt with this year. There are many more. We can only hope that next year we will see fewer cases, and in the meantime do what we can to rescue, neuter and re-home the many stray cats and kittens that come into our care.



Tia

Help Our Hound Appeal by Donna Yerby

We have recently been appealing for Tia, a 6-year-old Mastiff. ARC rescued Tia from a sad existence in very cramped conditions where she was used for breeding until she was deemed no good and discarded. She was overweight, had no proper training, and was kept purely as a puppy-making machine, without any love, affection or care. You would think after such a tough life that Tia would be depressed and miserable. But she has surprised and amazed us with her energy and enthusiasm and she has a truly lovely nature - she just needs some careful handling and lots of cuddles and we know she will make a devoted pet in time.

Having lived in kennels for around 3 months, Tia is now finally in a foster home. We have raised £580 for Tia to date using Just Giving and our new database. You can visit Tia's fundraising page here for more information or to give a donation: www.justgiving.com/helpourhound/

New Rabbit Re-homing Process By Helen Halliday

Over recent years, much has been done to try to raise the profile of the pet rabbit and its care in the UK, with national welfare campaigns, local initiatives and press coverage of all kinds. The message rings out; rabbits are much misunderstood, complex and needy animals that require a big commitment in time, space, care and finance.

With this in mind, we at ARC took the bold step of reshaping the way we re-home the rabbits in our care. The new process for re-homing is now standardised and straightforward, with the initial contact either by phone or by e-mail, being used by the volunteers to assess the current level of experience and competence, how the bunnies will live and what kind of rabbit would most suit the new home. By using an adoption questionnaire, information can be gathered prior to going forward to a more in depth telephone conversation and the resulting home visit.



One of our rabbits looking for a home



Above and Below: More rabbits that need good homes

This has provided an invaluable opportunity to improve or update people's rabbit knowledge, or, for the total novice, give them a really good starting point. Each applicant is now given a tick-sheet and the associated information sheets to work from outlining ARC's new minimum re-homing standards, and is supported by the volunteers whilst they prepare for their home check. With all prospective new homes getting a personal visit from one of the team of friendly home check volunteers, it's a great chance to ask and answer those last minute questions, before adoption takes place.

ARC can certainly be proud of their stance on rabbit re-homing, playing an important role in the movement towards better standards of care for the rabbit as a companion animal. Despite the credit crunch, ARC has continued to re-home during the summer and autumn months following the introduction of this system, and we are pleased to be able to welcome so many more keen supporters of ARC as a result.





Caring for Older Animals

By Helen Trounce

ARC not only re-homes young animals to new and loving homes. We also have many older animals who come through our doors. Often we will look for long-term foster homes for older or sick animals, so that they can end their days in the safety and security of a loving home whilst still benefitting from ARC's fantastic medical care. Bella the cat was 14 when she was re-homed earlier this year with Lauren Baker and her partner in Surbiton...



Bella

“We are very happy with our new addition to the family. We have called her Bella as she is really beautiful. She has settled in so well, is very affectionate and loves cuddles, sitting on laps and finding sunny spots to curl up and sleep. Her appetite is good too - although she has no teeth so just eats soft food. You can definitely tell she is an older cat as she takes life slowly and I think she may have some arthritis in her back legs, but seems to be in good health and can still climb stairs and jump on beds and is not in any obvious discomfort. She seems very contented, and we are really happy to have her - she is a little ball of sunshine and fun to have around.” Lauren Baker, April 2009

Paula the rabbit was re-homed by ARC with her partner, Trevor, but unfortunately they were returned to ARC several years ago as the family did not want them anymore. Sadly Trevor died in 2008 due to a tumour growing in his chest, so Paula was left alone. They were already in long-term foster care, and Paula lived by herself for a few months indoors over the winter while ARC looked for a suitable partner. Paula has incredibly bad teeth and needs a dental once a month. As a result of this, she also has eye infections which come and go, and so she is pretty much permanently on medication. She is now about 8 years old and is as sprightly as ever, despite some suspected arthritis in her back legs.



Paula and Albert



Albert

About 6 months ago, a little brown bunny called Albert came in to Karen with his siblings; the litter was a result of in-breeding. Sadly one of the siblings died overnight, and Albert turned out to have terribly bad teeth, which is likely to be a result of being in-bred. We decided to pair Albert up with Paula as they both needed to go for a dental about once a month, even though he was only about 18 months old. At first the bonding didn't go so well, but over time Paula and Albert have become firm friends. They like to keep each other company on their many vet trips and snuggle up together at night.

If you would like to give a home to an older animal, please contact ARC for more information.

Elvis the House Rabbit

by Lorraine Want

It was eleven years ago when to my complete surprise, I was given a rabbit as a birthday present. He was a ten-week-old Himalayan and I named him Elvis. Prior to that I had never owned or thought about having a rabbit or any pet for that matter, so I made a decision then and there to look after him as best I could. In the beginning I fed him too much dry food, too many greens and not enough hay. I had him living sometimes indoors, other times outdoors, and he was

spoilt rotten. We went on a journey together and through him I learnt about the way of the bun. Elvis lived a happy life and passed away after nine and a half long and happy years.

Looking back it was irresponsible of the person who bought him as a gift; rabbits really do deserve better. However I think they make wonderful companions for couples or people living alone. At the moment there are many adorable rabbits at ARC in desperate need of a loving home. It may be something you've never thought of before, but if you have a suitable indoor or outdoor space and enough time to spare, then perhaps give it some thought... you might be surprised.

Having Elvis opened up a new world, one that today has led to my now being a trustee of ARC. We don't always know what is best in the beginning, but it comes down to the individual and their commitment. I have two new buns now, both rescued through ARC. I live in a flat and work full-time, but I make sure they are loved, fed, cleaned and given the respect they deserve, and I think the three of us are getting along just fine.



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